THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (d) The UGC has notified the University Grants Commission (Minimum qualifications required for the appointment and Career Advancement of teachers in Universities and Institutions affiliated to it) (3rd Amendment) Regulation 2009 , providing that qualifying the National Eligibility Test (NET) shall be the minimum eligibility for appointment as teacher with exemption provided to those who have obtained Ph.D degree in accordance with the standards and rigour detailed in the University Grants Commission (Minimum Standards and Procedure for award of M.Phil/Ph.D. Degree) Regulations 2009. The Regulations apply only prospectively and does not apply to regular appointments already made prior to the date of notification of the Regulations pertaining to NET as minimum eligibility *i.e.* 1st June, 2009.

Quality of teaching in higher education is a matter of great concern. When the Pay Review Committee recommendations in respect of teachers in colleges and universities were taken up by the Central Government, the salaries and other allowances for teachers were approved to be higher than those for the Group "A" Civil Services, subject to the eligibility conditions for appointments to teaching positions being tightened. This step, *inter-alia*, would ensure that over time the best talent comes into the academic profession through a process of tightening entry and liberalizing pay and other incentives.

Conference of Commonwealth Education

1005. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has represented the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the views expressed by Government in the Conference; and

(d) the decisions arrived so far for the minority Muslims, SCs, STs and OBCs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. Hon'ble Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of India led a delegation comprising Secretary (School Education and Literacy), Joint Secretary (Distance Learning), Joint Secretary (International Cooperation) and APS to Hon'ble Minister of Human Resource Development that participated in the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 15-18 June 2009. The focus of the conference was to improve access to early childhood care and education, secondary education, skill development, higher education, quality and professionalism of teachers, good governance, gender mainstreaming, education for respect and understanding, sustainable development, multi-grade teaching, strengthening HIV and AIDS education etc.

The communique issued at the conclusion of the conference clearly mention that the Ministers highlighted the need for all children to have equity of access to quality education, regardless of geographical location, resources, gender, ethnicity and ability, in order to equip them to interact effectively in a global community. Ministers committed themselves to working towards this end as a priority, while recognizing the need to tailor approaches to take account of socio-economic and cultural diversity across different member countries.

Education infrastructure in rural areas

1006. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the harsh fact that education in the rural areas suffers from inadequate infrastructure and quality teachers; and

(b) if so, the steps that would be taken to raise the standard of education at all the level?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) and (b) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which is a flagship scheme of the Government of India for universalization of elementary education, is being implemented in all States and UTs of the country. Under SSA, funds are provided to States/UTs both for appointment of teachers and for creation and upgradation of physical infrastructure in elementary schools.

Under the SSA programme, 2.63 lakh school buildings, 11.05 lakh additional classrooms, 1.98 lakh drinking water and 3.34 lakh toilet facilities have been approved for elementary schools so far. 9.30 lakh school toilet units have been constructed under Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) and 8.52 lakh rural schools have been provided drinking water supply from National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) and State schemes.

Under SSA, several activities have also been undertaken to improve the quality of elementary education. This includes, *inter alia*, recruitment of 9.91 lakh additional teachers to improve the pupil teacher ratio, in-service training of teachers for a period of 20 days every year, free distribution of textbooks for primary and upper primary classes to about 8.76 crore students, school development grant to schools and grants to teachers for teaching learning material, academic support to primary and upper primary schools through 6472 Block Resource Centres and 69268 Cluster Resource Centres, remedial teaching to children and upto 2% of district outlays for learning enhancement programmes.

Grants to private colleges

1007. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Government and private colleges in the country as on date, State-wise;